

AD-A172 451

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF
IRANIAN MILITARY OPERATIONS
IN THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

DONALD H. ZACHERL, MAJ, USA
B.S., United States Military Academy, 1974
M.A., Hofstra University, 1980

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AD A729457

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS		
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE					
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)		
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION U.S. Army Command and General Staff College		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable) ATZL-SWD-GD	7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION		
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Attn: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-6900			7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)		
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (If applicable)	9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER		
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)			10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS		
			PROGRAM ELEMENT NO.	PROJECT NO.	TASK NO.
			WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO.		
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) Strategic and Operational Implications of Iranian Military Operations in the Iran-Iraq War					
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Major Donald H. Zacherl					
13a. TYPE OF REPORT		13b. TIME COVERED FROM 8-1985 TO 6-1986		14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 1986 June 6	
15. PAGE COUNT 106					
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION					
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	Iran-Iraq War, Iranian Army, Iranian Revolution, Operational Analysis, Fighting Power, Persian Gulf, Shaw of Iran, von Clausewitz, Van Creveld, Strategic Analysis		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) See reverse side.					
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT <input type="checkbox"/> UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAME AS RPT. <input type="checkbox"/> DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified		
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL

19. ABSTRACT

The progress of the Iran-Iraq War has surprised analysts. In order to gain insight into events in the region and their implications, I propose an analytical framework using Carl Von Clausewitz and Martin Van Creveld, which is used to analyze the military worth of the Islamic Iranian Army.

The thesis has three logical steps leading to the eventual conclusion. First, the Imperial Iranian Armed Forces were fundamentally flawed. From its inception under Reza Shah, the people, army, government trinity had fatal cracks throughout. Muhammed Reza Pahlavi, attempting to build on the same structure, increased the pressure on the people, army, government trinity, resulting in a collapse. The weaknesses of this trinity was demonstrated by the patent inability of the army to defeat the revolution in spite, or even because of, the lavish augmentation of equipment.

Second, the Islamic Iranian army proved to have remarkable power and resilience in the Iran-Iraq War. Surprised by a powerful invader, hampered by desertion, eroding equipment, and unreliable logistics, the Iranian Armed Forces resisted the attack and went on the offensive. Actions were characterized by courage and fighting power, excellent staff work, and operational level planning.

Third, the change in the Armed Forces was causally linked to the impact of the Islamic Revolution on the people, army, government trinity. The strong bond between Khomeini and the people, and the new army legitimacy and ethic, had a multiplicative effect on the military capability of the army. The result was an army with resilience, flexibility, and potential for real growth in military power.

The war, paradoxically, has had a stabilizing effect on the Persian Gulf Region. The region now has a viable collective security organization, less vulnerable oil lines of communications, and is carefully watched and guarded by the U.S. However, the war, when it ends, is likely to have a destabilizing effect on Iran's neighbors. Iran has the military growth potential to become the dominant regional power with a capability to challenge the Superpowers for control of the Persian Gulf.

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: Donald H. Zacherl
Title of Thesis: Strategic and Operatinal
Implications of Iranian Military
Operations in the Iran-Iraq War

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other government agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF IRANIAN MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR: An analysis of the modern Iranian Army from Reza Shah to the Iran-Iraq War. Focus is on the effect of the revolution on the Iranian Army's fighting power, by Donald H. Zacherl, USA, 106 pages.

The progress of the Iran-Iraq War has surprised analysts. In order to gain insight into events in the region and their implications, I propose an analytical framework using Carl Von Clausewitz and Martin Van Creveld, which is used to analyze the military worth of the Islamic Iranian Army.

The thesis has three logical steps leading to the eventual conclusion. First, the Imperial Iranian Armed Forces were fundamentally flawed. From its inception under Reza Shah, the people, army, government trinity had fatal cracks throughout. Muhammed Reza Pahlavi, attempting to build on the same structure, increased the pressure on the people, army, government trinity, resulting in a collapse. The weaknesses of this trinity was demonstrated by the patent inability of the army to defeat the revolution in spite, or even because of, the lavish augmentation of equipment.

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Third, the change in the Armed Forces was causally linked to the impact of the Islamic Revolution on the people, army, government trinity. The strong bond between Khomeini and the people, and the new army legitimacy and ethic, had a multiplicative effect on the military capability of the army. The result was an army with resilience, flexibility, and potential for real growth in military power.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As with most research topics, this one evolved from a grander, more sweeping idea, and was reduced by limitations in time, resources, and by simple common sense. I owe a great deal to Dr. Gawrych, of the Combat Studies Institute, who constantly encouraged me, patiently corrected my repeated errors, and helped me maintain my perspective. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Childress, of the Department of Joint and Combined Operations, who sifted out my methodological errors, and pressed me to defend each logical step. Without their efforts and encouragement, the thesis would have been a different, and far poorer, product.

I also would like to acknowledge the help of two other scholars: Carl Von Clausewitz and Martin Van Creveld. My research and analysis did not coalesce until I read, and then re-read, their writings. To the extent I have adequately applied Clausewitz and adapted Van Creveld, a more complete understanding of contemporary events in Iran is possible.

Finally, but most importantly, I owe a great and continuing debt to my wife, Marianne, who made it possible for me to have the time to work.

Any errors in the thesis are entirely my own.



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STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS
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By Donald H. Zacherl, MAJ, USA

Chapter One

Thesis Intent, Analytical Framework,
Chapter Organization,
and Significance

"War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity--composed of primordial violence, hatred and enmity, which are to be regarded as blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.

Carl Von Clausewitz

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I. Thesis Intent.

I intend to show that Iranian army's Military Worth was significantly changed by the Islamic revolution. The nature of this change, I suggest, was a fundamental realignment of the three elements of war: the people, the army, and the government. As a result, the military balance of power has radically altered with significant effect on the strategic situation in the Persian Gulf region.

The thesis has four steps. The first step will show that the Military Worth, as defined by Martin Van Creveld, of the pre-revolutionary army was weaker than it appeared because of the weak linkage between the three fundamental elements. The second step analyzes the performance of the Iranian army in the Iran-Iraq War, demonstrating its high level of military performance. The third step identifies the Islamic revolution as the proximate cause of the strengthened people-army-government linkage. The fourth step will speculate on the strategic and operational implications for the use of landpower in the region.

II. Analytical Framework.

It was necessary to adopt a new analytical framework for two reasons. First, military events in Iran were, and are, unpredictable.¹ At the time of the Revolution, for example, the Imperial Iranian Armed Forces were fifth

largest in the world and largest in the region.² A military modernization program continued up to the Shah's departure, and included 12 billion dollars in purchases from the United States alone.³ Neither was the Shah's army inexperienced in internal control operations. In fact, it was its primary use.⁴ Yet, outside observers, counting the size and quality of the military equipment in the Iranian army, were surprised by its failure to successfully oppose the revolution.

The perseverance of the Iranian armed forces in the Iran-Iraq War was equally unexpected. Analysts, in and outside the region, including Saddam Hussein, were unpleasantly surprised by Iran's resistance to the invasion and its subsequent successes on the battlefield. So confident was Saddam Hussein, in fact, that he was on the verge of announcing the annexation of Khuzestan shortly after the invasion began.⁵ The shock of the successful Iranian counteroffensive in 1982 caused a major strategic shift by the Gulf Cooperation Council from supporting Iraq to pressing for a ceasefire.⁶ Most recently, the renewed Iranian offensive once again caught the world by surprise. Up until the recent large scale attacks, it was assumed that Iran was too exhausted to carry on the war.⁷

Secondly, the Islamic Revolution in Iran was a profound and genuinely unique political, social, and religious event which may prove to be on the same scale and importance as

the French and Russian Revolutions.⁸ Previous analytical frameworks have not addressed the combined effect on the people, army, government linkage.

The analytical framework adopted is a combination of two related, and simple, paradigms: Carl Von Clausewitz's model of the nature of war and Martin Van Creveld's formulation of Military Worth. Although each framework is simple, sometimes "the simple things are difficult".⁹

A clear understanding of the linkage between them is vital. I will clarify the relationship by first explaining Van Creveld's formulation, then Von Clausewitz's model, and finally the way I have linked them in the thesis.

Van Creveld defines the Military Worth (Wm) of an army as equal to the Quality (Q1) and Quantity (Q2) of its equipment multiplied by its Fighting Power (Pf).¹⁰ I have expressed this as follows:

$$Wm = (Q1 + Q2)Pf$$

The Quality and Quantity of equipment are additive: both the number of tanks and their excellence as tanks are vital. Put another way, a smaller number of excellent American tanks are often equated to larger numbers of poorer quality Soviet tanks. These two factors are measurable, and armies spend enormous resources and effort measuring the size and quality of opposing forces military equipment.

Fighting Power is defined as "the sum total of the mental qualities that make an army fight".¹¹ It manifests it self in discipline, cohesion, morale, initiative, courage, toughness, and the willingness to fight and die.¹² Fighting Power is multiplicative and has greater immediate effect than the Quality and Quantity of equipment. However, a very high level of Fighting Power can not overcome very low levels of poor equipment. If either set of components are reduced to near zero, the Military Worth is near zero, regardless of the elements when separately valued.

Fighting power is more difficult to measure than the Quality and Quantity of equipment. Detailed objective data on the Iranian army's discipline, cohesion, and morale, is virtually impossible to obtain and what little exists is of limited value in any case. However, Van Creveld provides an insight into the secret of Fighting Power. The secret of Fighting Power lies in the relationship between the armed forces and society, the powerful influence of religious and ideological beliefs, and primary group cohesion."¹³ Von Clausewitz's model of the nature of war will provide the tool to unlock this secret.

Clausewitz reduces the nature of war to "a remarkable trinity": animus, estimates, and political objectives. Animus, which mainly concerns the people, is blind, violent hatred as a natural force. Estimates, which are the province of the commander and his army, is the play of chance and

probability. Political objectives, which is the concern of the government alone, is the realm of reason and policy. War exists in a balance between these three tendencies, "like an object suspended between three magnets".¹⁴

"These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another."¹⁵

Van Creveld's secret of Fighting Power; resting on the relationship between the armed forces, society, and personal beliefs, echoes the relationship in Von Clausewitz's remarkable trinity. By examining the Iranian people, army and Government, (the Clausewitzian elements), I can determine the nature of Iranian Fighting Power, (in Van Creveld's formulation). Applying Fighting Power to the Quality and Quantity of equipment, I can then estimate the Iranian army's Military Worth. An accurate estimate of the Iranian army's Military Worth allows more accurate analysis of the implications for the region.

III. Organization.

Chapter one, which is the current chapter, addresses the thesis intent, analytical framework, organization, and significance.

The purpose of Chapter two is to examine the Pre-revolutionary Iranian army using the methodology outlined. Chapter two sets the historical background of the Pre-revolutionary army beginning with its birth under Reza Shah and its development under his son, Mohammed Reza Shah. It concludes with an analysis of the pre-revolutionary army's Military Worth; the quality and quantity of equipment and an estimate of its fighting power based on an analysis of the people, army, government relationship.

Chapter three examines the military performance of the Iranian army during the Iran-Iraq war. Chapter three shows that the Iranian army's Military Worth significantly improved despite a steady deterioration in the Quality and Quantity of equipment; the inescapable conclusion is the Fighting Power has significantly improved.

If the Iranian army's Military Worth has improved as a result of a significantly improved Fighting Power, what was the cause? Chapter four examines the army from the time of the Revolution up to the Iraqi invasion to determine if the bond between the people, the army, and the State, changed in such a way that Fighting Power was enhanced.

Chapter five summarizes the thesis conclusions and speculates on the strategic use of landpower in the region.

IV. Significance.

There are four primary reasons for the significance of the region and hence the thesis: oil, geopolitical position, superpower interest, and the war itself (both in respect to the other three factors and for purely professional and intellectual reasons).

The importance of oil and the Persian Gulf does not appear to require strenuous justification. The majority of the region's petroleum exports still exit through the Gulf, although this has diminished as a result of the war. Nevertheless, 58% of the world's known oil reserves are in the Gulf Region. Of that, 16% are in Iran, as well as 20% of the world's known natural gas reserves. Approximately one third of the world's petroleum production and 30% of the US petroleum imports are from the Gulf region. Europe and Japan import 70% of their petroleum products from the Gulf.¹⁶ Although considerable effort by petroleum importers has gone into reducing their dependence on the region, the long term importance of the region is clear.

Oil is even more important to the Gulf exporters. Greater than 82% of the GNP of the Gulf states is made up of oil revenues.¹⁷, although oil revenues made up only 22% of Iran's GNP before the war. As result, Iran may be less concerned over oil revenue and, therefore, Gulf stability than her neighbours.

Iran's geopolitical position justifies its significance, even without the importance of oil. Iran sits at the conjunction of the Asian and Arab world and is athwart vital petroleum trade routes. A 500 mile radius of her borders, reachable by modern combat aircraft, includes virtually all of the Caspian Sea, the Persian gulf, Oman, Kuwait, the smaller Gulf states, and Saudi Arabia's oil fields and ports.¹⁸ In addition, Iran borders on Iraq, Turkey, Russia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and controls the Persian Gulf islands astride the traffic lanes for oil tankers. Should Iran achieve sufficient military power and motive, its impact would be enormous.

Terrain and the presence of resources are not relevant unless the policies of the powers in the region are taken into account. The region is of particular and acute interest to both the superpowers. Iran is high among Soviet extranational priorities and is an area of historical Russian strategic interest.¹⁹ Premier Brezhnev listed the Persian Gulf as among the Soviet Union's two highest extranational priorities.²⁰ The Soviet Union has had, since 1921, a "treaty of friendship" which requires Iran to prevent "anti-soviet" activities in Iran in exchange for a promise of non-intervention.²¹ The USSR has supported separatist movements in Iran, is involved in the Tudeh (Masses) party. Additionally, the Soviet Union recently

began a program designed to increase her power projection into the region.²²

Additionally, Iran is specifically covered by the Carter doctrine, which established the region as an area of vital US interests. It is an area of specific contingency operations by USCENTCOM (US Central Command) and USREDCOM (US Readiness Command). The US has responded to threats to close the Gulf by military reinforcement and a promise to keep the Gulf open and free to traffic.

Finally, the current government in Iran is largely unaffected by attempts to modify its foreign policy. Its open hostility to the "Great Satan" (the US), and the "Lesser Satan" (the USSR), has meant that it owes no allegiance to either Superpower. Further, its position as an energy supplier gives it more economic flexibility than its neighbours and allows it relative economic independence. Its support of terrorism and refusal to act in concert with other regional nations has further isolated it politically. In sum, its foreign policy, regionally and globally, is relatively encumbered and unpredictable.

The danger is that the Persian Gulf Region, which is vital to both the Superpowers, is in danger of domination by a hostile nation that is largely beyond their influence.

The war itself is significant for policy and professional reasons. First, the strong Iranian resistance and subsequent stunning successes were completely

unexpected, as was earlier related. Additionally, the tactical, operational, and strategic aspects are not well known or understood. Until Iranian military power and the Iran-Iraq war is more adequately understood, reliable estimates are unachievable. As a result, policy regarding Iran is likely to be ineffective.

Second, the war is, or ought to be, of intense professional interest. It is a major, modern, sustained mid to high intensity conflict which has included repetitive, sequential, multi-division operations, and tactical innovation. It included the heavy use of chemical weapons and strategic rockets, and conventional strikes on nuclear targets. Further, the lessons of the war are untainted by Superpower logistical sponsorship, unlike the Arab-Israeli Wars, and is a better harbinger of future conflicts of this type. Additionally, it allows an insight into the Iranian and Islamic military tradition, the Islamic revolution and the Iranian military leader.

Given Iran's potential as an aggressive, militant, and well resourced force, a real understanding of the war is essential. A new army, and a new leadership, born in revolution, fired by religious zeal, and tempered by war, is arising. The forces that have shaped and are shaping this potential military power in one of the most volatile and vital areas of Superpower interest are of global significance.

ENDNOTES

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Chapter Two

The Evolution of the Modern Iranian Army from Reza Shah to the Islamic Revolution

"The first of these three aspects mainly concern the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government...These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another. A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless."

Carl Von Clausewitz.

The relationship between the people, the army and the government, is complex and changeable. To gain insight into the evolution of the modern Iranian army and its Fighting Power, I will trace the three Clausewitzian elements from Reza Khan, through his son Reza Muhammed Pahlavi, up to the Islamic revolution. This is done by dividing the pre-revolutionary period into two parts corresponding to the Pahlavi Shahs.

Foundations of the Imperial Iranian Army.

Reza Khan, later Reza Shah, was a semiliterate soldier who came to power through the army. His accomplishments were considerable. He built a national standing army virtually from scratch, introduced social change, expanded civil law, and promoted education, industrialization, and nationalism. The army which he built was the mainstay of his power. It became his personal instrument and was used against his opponents, including the Islamic clergy and the people when recalcitrant.

However, in spite of remarkable improvements in the army's size and organization, it collapsed in 1941 when first seriously challenged by a comaparative force. So rapid and complete was its capitulation that Field Marshall Sir William Slim described it as "opera bouffe".¹

Before World War I, Iran had no national standing army. Three native armies, officered by foreigners, policed the country and acted in defense of the foreign interests in Iran. These were the Cossack brigade, lead by Czarist Russian Officers, the South Persia rifles, lead by British officers, and the Gendarmerie, a national police, lead by Swedish officers.

The Bolshevik revolution upset the Russian-British balance in Iran, as well as caused the withdrawal of the Russian officers. This departure gave Reza Khan, who was an officer in the Cossack Brigade, to assume Command of the brigade which was garrisoned around Teheran. The Persian Qajar regime, in an attempt balance the unmatched British power, appealed to the new Soviet Union for support. In 1921, in the midst of negotiation over the "Treaty of Friendship", a revolution, supported by Reza Khan and the Cossack Brigade, seized power. (The 1921 Treaty of Friendship is often cited by the Soviet Union as legitimizing its interest in the internal events in Iran. No modern Iranian government recognizes it, which is natural considering the circumstances described).

Reza Khan, who was made minister of war, proved resourceful and effective. He moved to form a single national army by unifying the separate forces; it was the first single army in Iran's long history. He purged foreigners and reduced foreign influence in army

organization, culture and language with an uncompromising zeal.

However, in spite of his promotion of nationalist causes in every aspect of Iranian life, he valued the knowledge of the west and educated his son and his best officers abroad. In 1925, he persuaded the Majlis, the Iranain parliament, to introduce universal conscription. The Same year he was proclaimed Shah.

Over the next fifteen years, officers loyal to him were placed in influential government positions. During the same period the army was expanded from 40,000 to 125,000.² It became highly centralized under the direct control of the Shah as the Commander in Chief. Promotion, education, and perquisites were based on the Shah's evaluation of the officer's personal loyalty. Disloyalty was harshly punished.³

Initially, conservative elements of the Majlis and religious leaders were allied with his programs, which they correctly interpreted as nationalistic and opposed to foreign influence. However, not all of the regimes reforms were well received. Many of Reza Shah's nationalist goals were at odds with the Islamic clergy. With the introduction of a codified judicial system, the clergy lost its authority over civil law and religious trust funds.⁴ Marriage and divorce civil codes represented attempts to reduce clerical power, as did active programs to promote western dress and

restrictions on wearing clerical garb. Religious instruction was placed under control of the government education system. Wearing of a veil by women was forbidden.

Both the Reza Shah and the Islamic clergy intended to influence the behavior of the people. The clergy, however, had a distinct advantage in their access to the people. Frequent attendance at services assured that the faithful heard the clerical viewpoint far more often than the government's. Believing in the Koranic interpretation and administration of civil law by Islamic clergy, the governments credibility in the eyes of the people was gradually weakened, as was the people-government relationship. Correspondingly, the linkage between the clergy and the people grew stronger.

Opposition to the Shah was repressed regardless of the source. Increasingly alarmed by the Soviet Union's revolutionary influence, he eventually outlawed the communist party. Rebellion, whether tribal, political, or religious, was harshly repressed. The army, ostensibly designed to defeat foreign aggression, was primarily used in an internal security role, further weakening the people-army linkage.

The army that Reza Shah developed was put to the test in 1941 when Iran was invaded by Britain and the Soviet Union. Pursuing neutrality as the safest course, but accepting German technical advisers, Reza Shah would not

allow the transport of allied material to the Soviet Union to cross Iran. As Churchill noted in description of this event, "Inter Arma, silent leges."--(between Armies, laws are silent)⁵.

The British attacked on the 25th of August in the south from the Iraqi city of Basra with one division to capture Abadan and Khorramshahr, and in the west with one division from Qasr-e-Shirin toward Kermanshah. Although one brigade and one regiment was armored, they may have been less effective than the other attacking units, since they were road bound.

The objective was to capture the Abadan oil fields, control communications, and secure a route to the Caspian sea. This plan was repeated virtually without change by the Iraqi's almost 40 years later. The Soviets, fighting desperately with the Nazi's on their west, did not put their best troops in the south to invade Iran. Never the less, they entered Azerbaijan, intending to push to Teheran. The total invading force, British and Soviet, was not more than seven division equivalents; five Russian and two Anglo-Indian. Iran was defended by five divisions.

Reza Shah was clearly depending on the Military Worth of his army to resist the Anglo-Russian invasion. In a speech to the Majlis concerning possible invasion by Russian and British forces, he stated "Certainly we can count on our disciplined forces...". In addition, he ordered the press

and the Government propaganda apparatus to concentrate on informing the people on the world situation and the need for strength and resistance. ⁶.

Additionally, he refused ample opportunity to comply with allied demands and remained intransigent, preferring to offer battle instead. Defending with five Iranian divisions against a coalition of seven Russian and Anglo-Indian divisions is perfectly reasonable, if the divisions are of comparable Military Worth. Reza Shah clearly thought so, since he had confidence in his army, which he had expanded from 40,000 to 120,000, and had used it successfully as his personal instrument.

There is no evidence to suggest that Reza Shah thought Churchill was bluffing.⁷ Given the evident British and Russian need, commitment and capability, it would have been unreasonable to think the Anglo-Russian ultimatum was a ruse. However, even if the Reza Shah had thought so, it could not have been his intent to offer no resistance should an invasion occur. His army collapsed on contact with its enemy, despite Reza Shah's twenty year effort to strengthen it.

No serious resistance was encountered and conscripts deserted in the thousands. ⁸ In the south, one infantry brigade captured Abadan, while "the majority of Persian forces escaped in lorries"⁹ In the central sector near Kermanshah, the defenders "abandoned their positions

hastily". On the 28th, just as a continued attack was about to be launched, the Iranian commander surrendered. The total number of British casualties for the whole operation was 22 killed and 42 wounded. 10

There was no popular resistance, in spite of a year long program by Reza Shah to impress the people with the need to resist a possible invasion.¹¹ Faced with the collapse of the army, the complacency of the people, and the lack of government resolve, Reza Shah ordered a ceasefire on the 28th, three days after the invasion and before any major battle was fought or offered by the Iranians.

Mohammed Reza Shah, Reza Shah's son, provides the final evidence regarding the poor Military Worth of 1941 Iranian Army. "...except for a few isolated engagements, the resistance of the Iranian armed forces was completely ineffective."¹² The Iranian army was overwhelmed, not because of inferior numbers, but because of it chose not to resist. Even if totally overmatched, a cohesive, disciplined army will resist violently, and many times successfully. The Iranian army, in spite of its numerical improvements, was of lower Military Worth than its size would indicate. Using Van Creveld's formula, this can only occur if the Fighting Power is low.

Reza Shah's army was of low Military Worth because of its low Fighting Power, and had low Fighting Power because of an imbalance in the relationships among the elements of

Von Clausewitz's "remarkable trinity". The army had a weak relationship with the Iranian people and rigid relationship with the government, in the form of the Reza Shah as head of state and despot. The people, government relationship was a reflection the people, army relationship, already described as weak. The Fighting Power of the army was low as a direct result of the poorly balanced people, army, government trinity.

British forces withdrew on the 18th of October, although Soviet forces remained past the end of the war. Reza Shah did not resist British demands for his abdication, and in fact preferred it to "taking orders from some British Captain". The Majlis appointed his son, Reza Muhammed Pahlavi, the new Shah. Reza Shah went into exile, ultimately in South Africa. The new Shah very young, unprepared to rule, and dependent upon his advisors.¹³

Reza Shah had reasserted Iran's intent to control its own destiny. Authoritarian and nationalistic, he expanded the army and elevated the army's influence to the point that it was the single most important government body. He unified and expanded the army, used it extensively for enforcing social change, and elevated the wealth and social status of loyal military officers. However, he neglected the primary relationships between Iran's people, its army, and its government. The result was an army of low Fighting Power, and questionable Military Worth. How the new Shah would

handle the imbalances would determine the future of Iranian army's Military Worth, and ultimately the future of Iran.

A New Shah, An Old Pattern.

Reza Mohammed Phalavi, the ShahanShah, suddenly and unexpectedly occupied the Peacock Throne at the age of twenty two. His military education in Iran and Switzerland was that of an imperial officer cadet, and his father had taken great care to instill the monarchy in royal prince.

His father, in exile in South Africa, died three years after his abdication. Muhammed Reza Pahlavi had to depend on the advice of relatives, allies and senior military and government officials. Power became more defused and there was competition for greater shares of the Imperial power.

The Majlis, fearing that the new Shah would use the Armed forces to enforce a despotism similar to his father's, initially gained more authority over the Armed forces through its control of the military budget. A general roll back of Reza Shah's reforms occurred in other areas. religious and tribal leaders reasserted control, more traditional dress and language reappeared, as well as fascist, communist, religious and nationalist political parties.¹⁴ However, it was the challenge of another would be despot that was to shape Shah Pahlavi's attitude as ruler; the Prime Minister, Mohammed Mossadeq.¹⁵

Mossadeq had formed a coalition of nationalistic parties of every stripe, focusing on the control of Iran's oil. He was initially widely popular and was appointed Prime Minister, at the demand of the Majlis, in 1951. As the oil crisis, which he had helped to precipitate, worsened, Mossadeq demanded more and more control. He eventually, consolidated his control by assuming the role of minister of war, and though challenged by the Shah, was supported in the streets by radical religious clergy.

Mossadeq attempted to turn the army into his political instrument, as had Reza Shah. He purged the army of officers loyal to the Shah and promoted those loyal to him. The dependability of these officers, however, proved unreliable.

The political crisis worsened as Mossadeq lost support and more directly challenged the Shah, eventually deposing him. In 1953, in a short four day period during which the Shah left the country, Mossadeq was overthrown in a coup by army officers he had purged.

The challenge posed by Mossadeq was a formative one for the Shah. Where the Shah had reigned before, now he would rule.¹⁶ This was especially true in the army, which Mossadeq had tried to use against the Shah, but had ultimately proved the Shah's basis of power. Clearly, the army was to be his mainstay. However, this viewpoint was short sighted, and the schism between the people, the army, and the government,

evident during the rule of his father, although initially abatedm, would soon resume its growth.

The Shah began by purging officers affiliated with the communist Tudeh (Masses) party and outlawed the party itself, as had his father. He took steps to reduce the power of the Majlis by supervising the nomination of candidates and elections. He created several internal security organizations, the most notorious of which was SAVAK (Sazman-i Ittila'at va Amniyat-i Keshvar; National Intelligence and Security Organization)¹⁷

SAVAK was closely associated with the military and was run by high ranking military officers. These organizations were arranged in a bewildering system so that "everybody was watching somebody else".¹⁸ As an example, a super secret organization entitled the Special Intelligence Bureau operated out of the Shah's palace with the sole aim of working independently of SAVAK, presumably to act as the Shah's watchdog of SAVAK itself.¹⁹ A comprehensive study of these organizations is worthy of a thesis in itself. Suffice it to say, that they were an outgrowth of the Shah's concern for internal security and lack of trust.

Another feature of the Shah's lack of trust was the control of his military organizations. The General Staff acted as a planning and coordinating agency, but not as a command body. Service Chiefs of Staff, major subordinate

commanders and security organizations were encouraged to report directly to the Shah.²⁰

The result, in terms of the Clausewitzian trinity, were potentially catastrophic. A vicious cycle of brutal repression and resistance further separated the government, in the person of the Shah, from the people, and the people from the army as the tool of his oppression. The Shah put a considerable strain on the people, army, government relationship that eventually produced a major revolution. However, these trends are not a complete analysis and Fighting Power of the Iranian army and its Military Worth requires a more detailed analysis.

1975 was a watershed year for the Iranian army. National wealth suddenly increased as result of a sustained oil revenue windfalls, and the military budget dramatically increased correspondingly. The rapid increase in the Quality and Quantity of equipment provides an excellent opportunity to evaluate the Iranian army in Van Creveld's terms, and will provide greater insight into the army's Fighting Power.

From 1973 to 1975 Iranian Gross National Product more than doubled as a result of increased oil revenues. Defense expenditures increased more than fivefold and doubled as a percentage of the GNP in the same period. Most of the expenditures were on equipment and modernization, since manpower remained almost constant.²¹ The sudden influx of

equipment was impossible to absorb without waste and turmoil.

In addition, the rapid modernization brought with it a growing dependence on foreign sources for war materiel, a critical weakness in a protracted war. Although production of small arms had begun and plans for production of other types of equipment were laid out, at the time of the revolution, Iran was still almost completely dependent on outside sources for major items and technical expertise.

This was further complicated by a deliberate government decision to purchase equipment from different countries. In some cases, the tank of one country was matched with the main gun of another. The resulting mix of weapons, calibers, and repair items to support them was a logistical nightmare.

The response, a computerized logistical system, exacerbated the problem by increasing the foreign dependence. In addition, the sophisticated electronics were even more likely to fail and less likely to be immediately or locally repairable.

In addition, the critical shortage of trained personnel throughout the country was eroding army morale and cohesion, vital elements of Fighting Power. The exploding economy had created a widespread demand for all technical skills. As the growing demand forced the Civilian wage scales up, officers either left the service, or began to chafe under the relatively low military salaries.²²

In an effort to meet the shortage, a new military class was rapidly expanded; Warrant Officers. Critically important to the modernizing army, they were promoted on the basis of their badly needed skills and therefore not necessarily loyal to the Shah. As the army came to depend more and more on these technicians, they began to garner an importance far beyond their rank in critical technical areas; maintenance, computerization, communications, weaponry and intelligence.

This critical group was not promoted on the basis of loyalty. The Shah, who reviewed all promotions to Major, did give them no special attention, in spite of their critical importance to the army.²³ They were a distinctly new feature in the Iranian army and a further potential fragmentation; officers in control of critical nodes with no specific loyalty to the Shah.²⁴

The loyalty and cohesion of the bulk of the enlisted force was eroding also. Largely short term conscripts, enlisted soldiers had scant affection for the regime to begin with.²⁵ Poorly treated and poorly paid, even before the sudden increase civilian wages, their morale, cohesion and loyalty suffered even more than the officer Corps.

As an ironic twist, efforts to make them more reliable in an internal security role had the opposite effect. Conscripts were routinely stationed in areas outside their native region. This was thought to assure their loyalty in the event of a local insurrection. However, the young

soldier, lonely and separated from his family, friends, and community, turned to the local mosque as the only area he recognized and felt comfortable in.²⁶ However, as the clergy increasingly opposed the Shah, the young conscripted soldier heard an ever louder and more insistent beat of criticism and condemnation of the Shah's regime. When the Revolution came, many enlisted joined in the revolt, some turning on their officers and killing them.²⁷

Between 1975 and the revolution, these problems grew more pronounced. In spite of enormous improvement in the Quality and Quantity of equipment, it could not resist the revolution when it came. When the Shah's army is evaluated, it becomes clear that its Military Worth was lower than it appeared. In Van Creveld's formulation, this can only occur when the Fighting Power is very low.

The people, army, government linkage was so weak and so imbalanced that violent, total revolution occurred. To the extent that we can gain insight into the Fighting Power of an army by analyzing the relationship between the people, the army, and the government, the Fighting Power was also very low. In the final analysis, the army did not only not overcome the revolution, but participated in it. The final military declaration of "non-interference" marked the end of the Pahlavi reign and beginning of the Islamic Republic.²⁸

Under different circumstances, could the Imperial Iranian Ground Forces have exhibited greater Military Worth?

Since I intend to compare the Military Worth of the Shah's army to the army of the Islamic Republic, the question is an important one. If Iraq had invaded before the revolution, would the Iranian army still have been so weak?

The question is unanswerable in any meaningful way. The real external threats did not have this effect. If one had materialized, the schism between the people, the army, and the government would be as serious and the weaknesses in military cohesion, morale, and loyalty would have also remained. It would be necessary to assume away the revolution and its causes before we again have an Iranian army of respectable Fighting Power and Military Worth. This assumption is such a departure from reality that analysis becomes speculative guesswork without utility.

Additionally, such a proposal begs the question. In the final analysis the Military Worth of the army was so low that it could not resist the revolution. It was of low Military Worth in spite of recent lavish augmentations in Quality and Quantity of equipment and because of poor Fighting Power. It was of poor Fighting Power as a result of basic weaknesses in the people, army, government relationship and erosion in military cohesion, loyalty and morale.

The effect of the revolution on the Military Worth of the Iranian army is revealed in the following chapter on its performance in the Iran-Iraq war.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER TWO

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Chapter Three

The Post-revolutionary Army in the Iran-Iraq War

"If you want to overcome your enemy you must match your effort against his power of resistance, which can be expressed as the product of two inseparable factors, viz, the total means at his disposal, and the strength of his will. The extent of the means at his disposal is a matter, though not exclusively, of figures, and should be measurable. But the strength of his will is much less easy to determine and can only be gauged approximately by the strength of the motive animating it."

Carl Von Clausewitz

Chapter three is subdivided into three subsections; a strategic overview of the conflict, events, and factors leading upto the war, an operational level analysis of selected Iranian military actions, and an overview and analysis of the Iranian army's performance.

It is the intent of Chapter three to show that the performance of the Iranian army in the Iran-Iraq war indicates that it is an army of considerable Military Worth inspite of low levels of the Quality and Quantity of equipment but because of considerable Fighting Power. If this is so, it strongly implies that the Revolution was the proximate cause for the change in Fighting Power. It then becomes the purpose of Chapter four to analyze the Revolution and to determine the effect on the army.

The Iraqi decision to go to war was based on the intent to take advantage of the apparently unsteady government in Iran, gain control of the Shatt al Arab water way (controlled by Iran, and Iraq's strategic link to the Persian Gulf), assert its dominance in the region, and perhaps annex the ethnically Arab; oil rich Khuzestan province.¹ She also expected that the operation would destabilize the reactionary Islamic republic and put an early end to the threat of Islamic fundamentalist revolution throughout the Moslem world. To help carry out its initial military operations, Iraq elicited considerable direct and

monetary support from the Persian Gulf and other Arab nations because, she pointed out with regularity, she fought an enemy that threatened them all. Although no direct evidence exists that Iraq was encouraged in its adventurism or sought advice in this regard, it is clear that they condoned the action.²

Iraq had another clear intent which can only be termed an overdevelopment of its sense of its rightful destiny as leader of the Arab world. After the Camp David accords, Egypt, the previous leader of the Arab states, was rejected without a clear successor. Here was an opportunity for Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq, that seemed to him to be too good to miss: a weak, belligerent, and thoroughly disliked non-Arab nation; a long term and arguably justifiable grudge; the promise of a permanent regional power realignment in Iraq's advantage; and the glittering possibility of leadership of the Arab nations on the world stage.

Additionally, the area of planned invasion looked especially vulnerable. Khuzestan, also known as Arabistan, was at least 40% Arab, and its oil workers had recently reacted violently in opposition to the Islamic government's attempts to influence operations in the oil fields and refineries.³ Hussein made much of the racial factor in public statements and may have over estimated its impact on ideological grounds.⁴ That Khuzestan was also almost

exclusively Shi'ite was discounted, since it was felt the ethnic loyalty would prove dominant. There was some reason to believe this. The corresponding border area of Iraq was also Shi'ite as was the Iraqi enlisted force. If racial loyalty was the dominant factor in Iraq, then, the ideology suggested it would be dominant in Khuzestan.

In the final analysis, Hussein's reach exceeded his grasp. Like many other dictators whose sense of destiny drove them to military adventurism, he could not turn down a seeming golden opportunity.

Iran was regionally isolated even before the revolution. Its clumsy and ineffective use of power against the Dhofar rebels in Oman and support of the Kurdish rebel against Iraq, its heavy handed negotiation with Iraq over the Shatt el Arab in 1975, and its paternalistic attitude toward the Gulf virtually guaranteed sufficient animosity in the region.

Since the Islamic revolution things had gotten decidedly worse. Iran held, with malicious intent, American Embassy and military personnel for ransom; the Iranian Revolutionary Party (IRP) was erratically and brutally rooting out opposition while competitors for IRP leadership fought amongst themselves. The IRP openly incited Islamic peoples everywhere, especially Iraqis, to revolt against their corrupt leaders.⁵ To make matters worse, its announced intention to use oil to gain concessions and as a

tool of influence in its foreign policy arsenal, assured regional and global enmity. However, it remained in OPEC, and joined with Syria, South Yemen, and Libya in the "Steadfastness front", a group of like minded radical states.

Post-revolutionary Iranian intent toward Iraq is more difficult to fathom. Although a low intensity border war had been in progress through the previous year, there was no troop redeployment other than for internal security.

Khomeini's strategic perspective appears to have an Ad Hominem quality. He made a number of threatening statements directed at the person of Saddam Hussein, calling him at one point the "dwarf pharaoh".⁶ He also directed personal attacks at other leaders whom he thought opposed him, both externally and internally, including the Saudi leaders after 1982.⁷ Khomeini's Ad Hominem foreign policy approach was later illustrated during the attempt to negotiate a truce between Iran and Iraq: he insisted that Hussein be put on trial and beheaded before an armistice be concluded. The key to the influence of Iran may be through a personal relationship with the Ayatollah.

Geography of the Battle area.

The Iraq-Iran border stretches roughly 1500 Kilometers from the Persian Gulf in the South to the common Turkish border. It transits swamplands, plains, desert and mountain

wasteland. In the southern border region that has seen the greatest fighting, the temperature ranges from just below freezing in January in the mid-nineties in July. Winter rainfalls are quite severe, with an annual rainfall of about 20 inches. Since the Tigris and Euphrates, which drain the central Iraqi basin, and the Karun river, out of the Iranian Zagros mountains, drains into the Shatt al Arab, the river routinely floods, covering a broad expanse of low lying swamplands. Seasonal rains can vary as much as 40%, however, and during the fall of 1980 rains were unusually heavy. The Iranian oil fields are fifty to 200 miles east of the border in the south of Khuzestan province; the Iraqi fields are 100 to 200 miles west of the border in the North at Kirkuk.

In the Northern and central sectors, the Zagros runs along the Iranian side of the border creating a formidable obstacle. The Iraqi terrain in the central sector is much flatter all the way to Baghdad, although it is more mountainous in Kurdistan as closer to Turkey. These areas are relatively arid, although there are woodlands in the higher altitude valleys and large cultivated and irrigated areas from Kirkuk to the Syrian border in the west.⁸

The Shatt al Arab, or the Shore of the Arabs, plays a central role in the events leading up to the war. The Shatt is a meandering channel, combining the Tigris, Euphrates and Karun rivers, and makes up the lower border between Iran and

Iraq. It is from on quarter to three quarters of a mile wide and silts up rapidly if it is not kept clear.

Possession and control of the Shatt has remained a bone of contention since it was used as a demarcation, however, the current debate began in 1914. The 1914 treaty, clarified in 1937, gave the bulk of the Shatt to Iraq, then under British control. This gave the Iraqis the potential of severely restricting Iranian passage from its major oil refinery in Abadan to the Persian Gulf. Iran continued to use the Shatt without change, but also planned and built several pipelines to points lower on the Gulf. In 1969, Iraq told Iran it might close the Shatt to Iranian shipping. In 1971, diplomatic relations were severed and a period of rising tension ensued.

With the exception of a temporary rapproachment during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, forces and actions on the border continued to build, culminating in several border clashes in 1974 and overt support of the Kurdish rebels in Iraq by Iran. In 1975, a treaty was worked out under Algerian auspices dividing the Shatt at the midpoint of the deepest channel, (the thalweg line), and ending Iranian support for the Kurds.⁹ The Iraqi negotiator was Saddam Hussein, later to become the first Iraqi civilian head of state, and initiator of the Iran-Iraq war.

Following the accord in 1975, both Iraq and Iran continued to improve their military forces; Iraq largely

because its poor performance in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, and Iran as part of its emerging agenda of security for the Gulf region. A more detailed analysis of the force comparison between the two powers before the war follows.

Before the war commenced, Iraq appeared on the verge of ascendancy in the Persian Gulf region. It had a well equipped army and Air Force, powerful allies, and a centralized government in firm control.

The Iraqi army was considered to have a good capability, having undergone intense scrutiny, reorganization, and training following its lackluster performance in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. By 1980 the army had more than doubled in size. Special emphasis was given to armored and armored infantry forces, air defense, anti-tank, Air Forces and transportation units. Saddam Hussein, a civilian who had come to power in 1979 through a protracted internal struggle with powerful revolutionary military leaders, had consolidated his control over the military forces.

The secular Ba'ath party had made use of the increased profit available through oil revenues and the standard of living had improved. Additionally, the Soviet Union was a military ally of long standing, having supplied the Iraqi army since the assassination of the Hashemite King in 1958. It had fully supported Iraq's involvement in the 1967 and 1973 wars with Israel and was closely allied politically

with the Ba'ath party and its general goals: pan-arabism, socialism, anti-colonialism, and the destruction of Israel.¹⁰

Accurate force comparisons are always difficult. This was particularly true in Iran in 1980 which was in a state of chaos and unreceptive to inquiries of any kind. The figures used here come from the Institute for International and Strategic Studies in London and are the most reliable, although difficult to verify outside of classified sources. As Clausewitz states in the introductory quotation, means are largely a matter of figures and easily measured; the strength of Iran's will, (in Van Creveld's terms, "Fighting Power") is the basic thesis question.

Table 3.1 shows selected elements for comparison in 1980, 1981, and 1982.¹¹ These figures cover the period I will focus on in my analysis of the war.

Table 3.1

IRAN

	80-81	81-82	82-83
Defense Spending, (\$ Bil)	4.2	4.2	Unk
Manpower (000's)	240	195	235
Tanks	1735	1410	1770
Armored fighting Vehicles	1075	Unk	700
Artillery	1100	1100	1300
High Performance Aircraft	725	665	67
Naval Seagoing Warships	7	7	7

IRAQ

	80-81	81-82	82-83
Defense Spending, (\$ Bil)	3.0	Unk	Unk
Manpower (000's)	242	252	342
Tanks	2600	2600	2300
Armored fighting Vehicles	2500	2100	3000
Artillery	1040	860	900
Aircraft	332	335	335
Naval Seagoing Warships	0	0	0

What can be gathered from the Table 3.1 is that rough parity existed in quantity of equipment at the beginning of the war, although Iran quantity of equipment was eroded, especially in Aircraft. In two critical areas, tanks and armored fighting vehicles, Iraq kept a considerable edge. In Naval Seagoing Warships (Frigates and Destroyers), Iran's edge allowed an immediate and permanent blockade of Iraqi oil sea line of communication.

The Quality comparison is more difficult. Since, in general, Iraq spent less on military hardware and got more, the quality of the equipment purchased may have been lower; however, the defense expenditures were offset by the source, (the Soviet Union) and loans received from other nations (notably Saudi Arabia during the War). The Iraqis, after the war commenced, complained about the quality of the Soviet aircraft ordnance; however, evidence suggests that the quality of the Iraqi pilots was more to blame. Additionally, the quality of the Iranian equipment was drastically reduced by the poor logistical program previously noted and the simple neglect after the Revolution. As an example, almost 60% of the army had deserted since the revolution and only 50%- 80% of Iran's aircraft were consider inoperable at the start of the war for maintenance. As Iran still held the American embassy personnel, it was unlikely that it would receive large scale

logistical support from the west for its higher quality western equipment.

It is assumed that no great difference existed between Iraq and Iran in the quality of the equipment. The equipment Iran purchased may have been of slightly higher quality, being of western manufacture and more expensive, but it was very poorly maintained and was without a logistical sustaining base. (As an aside, an indication of Iran's desperation to solve the logistical problem, it purchased repair parts from its sworn enemy; Israel. This source was limited, however, and was ended when the war front stabilized.

What is not stated in Table 3.1 is major inequities in two strategic areas of a long conflict; total population, GNP, and reserve manpower.

Table 3.2

IRAN

	79-80	80-81	81-82	82-83
Total population	39.3	38.25	39.67	39.1
(Mil)				
GNP (\$ Bil)	84.7	Unk	112.1	Unk
Reserve Manpower	300	400	400	440
(000's)				

IRAQ

	79-80	80-81	81-82	82-83
Total population	12.73	13.11	13.84	13.6
(Mil)				
GNP (\$ Bil)	21.4	39.0	Unk	Unk
Reserve Manpower	330	330	250	75
(000's)				

What is immediately noted is that Iran's population is over three times Iraq's; insignificant is a short war but decisive in a long one. Not unexpectedly, Iran's reserve manpower grows over time, while Iraq's shrinks. Also, Iran's GNP and oil output grew during the War. Following a post-revolutionary reduction, the Iran's oil exports rose to the OPEC ceiling by 1980. Contrastingly, Iraq's oil production has yet to achieve pre-war levels. Iraq has also received almost \$90 Billion in loan and loans guarantees during the war.

Two important facts are evident from analyzing the Quality and Quantity of equipment and the start of the war. First, there was rough parity between the land forces. Second, Iraq was potentially vulnerable in a protracted conflict because of its relatively small population, and dependence on oil revenue. The significance of this second factor is small initially, but grows exponentially as the war continues.

Relevant Demography.

Iran is ethnically and racially diverse. Primarily Persian (63%), Iran also includes Turk (18%), Arab (13%), Kurd (3%), and Baluchi and other minorities. The Arab minority is concentrated in Khuzestan, as previously noted.

Khuzestan was a semi-autonomous Arab state until the reign of Reza Shah, when it was forcibly absorbed.

Conversely, Iraq is ethnically Arab with the exception of Turk and Kurd minorities. However, its population is split between the Sunni in the north and west and the Shi'ite in the east along the Iran-Iraq border. Sunni's make up the majority of officers in the Iraqi army, while Shi'ites make up the bulk of the enlisted force.

In short, the ethnically Arab, religiously Shi'ite population of Southeastern Iraq abuts on the demographically similar Iranian population in Khuzestan. It is worth noting that the appeals to Arab brotherhood by Iraq and Shi'ite loyalties by Iran were both singularly unsuccessful.¹³

Two periods in the war are analysed in greater detail; first because the outcome of each was unexpected, and second because the unexpected outcome may help determine Iranian Fighting Power. The first is the Iranian reaction to the Iraqi invasion and the second is the Iranian counteroffensive campaign.

Iraq crossed the border with at least six divisions at two widely separated points. The Northern area was attacked with one division along a broad front near Qasr-e-Shirin along the traditional Baghdad - Teheran invasion route. It was apparently a defensive move to seize defensible terrain that would block access to the flatter, rolling terrain between the Iranian border and Baghdad.¹⁴ It was successful

as far south as Mehran, roughly 30 miles, but only 3 to 5 miles deep. Importantly, it was an area promised to Iraq by the Shah as part of the 1975 Algiers treaty, but not surrendered. No further advance was made in the area.

The remaining five armored and motorized divisions made the major attack in the south. The main element was a two division force which crossed the Shatt-al-Arab to seize Khorramshahr and Abadan. Three divisions crossed the border further north and began to drive along two axes toward Ahvaz (the capital of Khuzestan province) and Dezful. The primary objective was apparently to isolate the two oil refining ports in the delta of the Euphrates (Khorramshahr and Abadan) and cut the critical oil pipeline between them and Ahvaz, thereby denying Teheran oil for both internal consumption and export. The operation closely resembled the the successful British Invasion in 1941 in several respects; area, force size, and initial objectives.

Initial Iraqi reports were ecstatic. Within the first day, Hussein was on the verge of announcing the annexation of all of Khuzestan and stated, in fact, that the war had "asserted its own claims".¹⁵ However, progress was slower than expected. Iraqi forces stopped short of the Karun river in the South, and failed to reach either Dezful and Ahvaz, although Iraq claimed to surround them "on three sides". In part, this was a result of a political reluctance to incur

large casualties. Unquestionably, however, the virulence of the Iranian resistance was completely unexpected.¹⁶

By the end of September, Iraq was forced on the defensive; tactically, operationally, and strategically. Armor was dug in, infantry built up defensive positions, and attacks consisted of heavy artillery bombardment. A number of analysts have commented on the "World War I" flavor of this stage of the war, complete with entrenchments, artillery duels and, eventually, chemical weapons. Operationally, activities seemed to cease. Hussein, who felt his support would erode if casualties were high, and surprised by the Iranian resistance, abandoned any operational initiative. Strategically too, Iraq proclaimed the defensive. Hussein made his first offer of a ceasefire at the end of September and repeated his offer several times during the next six months. Iraq never regained the initiative.

The Iraqi misassessment was made by everyone else who had evaluated the comparative strength. What Iraq, and others, had missed was the surprising Iranian Fighting Power. The Quality and Quantity of equipment was more easily measured, and Iraq was given an edge, or at least parity. However, Fighting Power, the more nebulous, and more difficult to measure element of Military Worth, multiplied the Iran's capability out of proportion to the anticipated reaction.¹⁷

It appears that Iran was surprized by the invasion. Of the seven active divisions, none were on the Iraqi border, although an armored divison was in garrison near Ahvaz. However, roughly 240 military incidents had taken place between Iran and Iraq, many involving the Pasdran, or the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The Pasdran numbered about 30,000 at this time and was a light infantry force. It was primarily in Teheran and was the overt coercive element of the IRP. The integration of the Pasdran and the Regular Iranian army was eventually affected out of military necessity and is separately addressed.

Achieving strategic and tactical surprize, the Iraqi northern objectives were seized easily and no opposition was initially encountered in the countryside in the south. However, the Iranian strategic reaction was swift and apparently well planned. Air strikes began almost immediately on Iraqi strategic targets (oil fields, air bases, etc.), the Iranian Navy closed the Shatt to Iraq and attacked Iraqi ports, active Army forces where deployed, and reserves mobilized, although the Army's reacted more slowly.

Such a rapid, coordinated response can not be made Ad Hoc. The Shah's army had done extensive planning for just such an event; it is likely that the contingency plans previously developed were dusted off and used.

What is most significant, however, was the speed and efficiency in the execution of these plans. What can be

concluded is that the Iranian armed forces acted with energy and dispatch to a bolt-out-of-the-blue attack. It was not the reaction an armed force fractured by indiscipline or indecision; it was the reaction of an army with a clear goal and single intent. From the first moment, then, the Islamic army was vastly different than the Reza Shah's army, or the army that rebelled against its officers during the revolution.

Tactically, the resistance was also noted for its vigor. Khoramshar, the Iranian city closest to the border, was defended successfully for over a month, initially by police and local militia, later by regular army and Pasdaran forces. The defense was so stubborn that it was renamed Khomeinshahr - City of Blood.¹⁸

Iraq's lack of preparation for urban warfare did not stop it from launching heavy persistent attacks. Nor does it explain the tenacity of the city's defenders, long after the city had been isolated, or the equally stubborn defense of neighbouring Abadan, which was not claimed by Iraq until 10 November and was contested continually.¹⁹ However, it can be explained as a manifestation of an energized people, army, government linkage.

The remainder of the front was largely stabilized while fighting for the cities of Abadan and Khoramshar went on into October and November. By January 1981 Iranian redeployments and preparation for the initial

counteroffensives were in progress. The Pasdran, still separate from the army, was conducting nighttime cross border sabotage raids. The first major counter-attack at Susangerd was to be a watershed for the army, and, also for Iranian politics.

The false start; the Battle of Susangerd.

The Iranian counteroffensive at Susangerd was ultimately unsuccessful, although it had a promising beginning. It resulted in a shake up of army command and control, and the integration of the Pasdran. It was also the cause for the eventual downfall of Bani Sadr.

For a number of months, Bani Sadr, then the Prime Minister, had planned for a large scale offensive to drive the Iraqis out. It was his intent to develop the army as his power base, a pattern noted earlier in Iranian History, and to cement his position as a leader with the people and Khomeini. He was also anxious to fortify himself against the attacks of his principal rivals in the radical clergy, whose military power base was in the Pasdran.

The battle plan was ambitious, concentrating armor in a penetration to break the front and carry the war into Iraq. Significantly, the attack was made without the Pasdran, a largely infantry force. Bani Sadr did not want to share his victory with the the radical clergy who opposed him.

The attack made initial gains, but the penetration could not be sustained or defended, and a large number of tanks were lost or abandoned.²⁰

A number of critical decisions were made as a result of the defeat of the battle of Susangerd. First was Khomeini's proclamations to "leave the war to the soldiers and Generals" and his attacks upon the clergy for interference in the war. This was apparently directed at all elements of the government, including Bani Sadr and the radical clergy, although the clergy still championed the Pasdaran.²¹ The ultimate result was the establishment of the Strategic Defense Council, which included Bani Sadr, IRP representatives, the Army and Pasdaran Commanders.

Second, was Khomeini's commitment to continue the war until Hussein was overthrown. This was clear at the Islamic peace conference in March, where he insisted that Iraq withdraw before negotiations began, and effectively scuttled the conference by insisting that Hussein's Koranically correct punishment was beheading.

The result was the most significant change in the Iranian army thus far; the coordination and eventual integration of the Pasdaran and the regular army. When the counteroffensive campaign kicked off in May, the Pasdaran was a vital part of the attack and battlefield command and control, although still at this time as separate units.²²

Three lessons can be drawn from the Iranian counter offensive campaign. First, it was a stunning success. Second, it was coordinated between the Regulars and Pasdaran, as well as other Naval and Air forces. Third, it was planned from an operational perspective. It may, in fact, be one of the more adroit examples of operational art in the offense since the World War II. Finally, the campaign established the Iranian army as an instrument of considerable Military Worth inspite of considerable difficulties in Quality and Quantity of equipment.

The intent of the campaign was to force the Iraqi army out of Iran by coordinated multi-divisional attacks from unexpected fronts. The campaign had three major battles: the battle for Abadan in September 1981, operation Undeniable Victory in March 1982, and operation Holy City in May 1982. When viewed as a campaign, they resemble a boxer's left-right-left combination.

The battle for Abadan began with a series of diversionary attacks far north of the city which resulted in an Iraqi redeployment away from Abadan. The two division main attack began with a successful night infiltration by light infantry to identify weak spots. It was followed up by infantry engagement of strong points to fix them in position and combined arms (infantry, armor, artillery, air) attacks at identified weak points. As a result, Abadan was recovered, Iraq was forced to withdraw to more defensible terrain

beyond the Karun River, and Iranian LOCs were restored in Khuzestan.

Shortly after the battle, the top Regular and Pasdram commanders were killed in a plane crash. Although the loss of the top regular and Pasdram commanders must have set back the army to an extent, it did not lose its confidence or its initiative; in other words, its fighting spirit. That they were all killed together dramatically indicates how much coordination between the two forces had improved in a very short time. References in the thesis to the Iranian army after this battle include both the old Regular army and the Pasdram, unless otherwise specified.

Operation Undeniable Victory, which took place in the north in the vicinity of Dezful, began in the third week of March with a force of roughly four divisions: 100,000 regulars and 30,000 Pasdram light infantry. Iraq had launched a number of spoiling attacks which resulted in a high number of casualties and a decision to dig in even deeper. The Iranian attack began with a night insertion of commando forces behind Iraqi lines, followed by a night attack on two separate axis by combined Armor and Infantry units. The Iraqis, surprised by both the location and size of the attack, later claimed overwhelming odds and "human wave" infantry assaults by frenzied religious fanatics.²³ This is almost certainly false. While infantry was

undoubtedly used courageously and aggressively, it was also used with great skill and effectiveness.

In order to appreciate the skill and effectiveness of the Iranian fighting force it is necessary to explain it in greater detail. Night attacks, which are always the most difficult and require the most detailed planning, staff work, rehearsal, training and leadership, were routine throughout this campaign. Units, which were frequently out of contact, acted with initiative and elan. For example, small detachments of infantry were trained to attack specific Iraqi positions, suppress the strong point to mask the armored penetration, and assure a breakthrough.

Not only is the effectiveness, aggressiveness and skill of the army demonstrated by its victory in these difficult and complex night operations, but also in the high ratios of enemy to friendly dead. During this campaign, the Iranian soldiers killed their opponents at a ratio of about two to one, without Air supremacy, against a prepared and well equipped enemy in strong echeloned defensive positions, at night.²⁴ It was a courageous, effective, and lethal performance that any army would be proud of. It was certainly not a series of suicidal assaults by crazed fanatics seeking martyrdom.²⁵

The battle destroyed an Iraqi armored division, recovered 900 square miles of territory, and forced the front back to the Iraqi border, but was not wholly

successful. The ultimate goal of the two arms of the double envelopment was deep inside Iraq and, while Iraqi casualties and MIAs totaled 40,000, Iranian casualties and MIAs were close to 10,000.²⁶

In these battles, the Iranian forces seldom achieved the three to one force ratio thought necessary for successful attack, but were successful anyway.²⁷ Given the growing disadvantages in the Quality and Quantity of equipment, the multiplicative aspect of Fighting Power is indicated as the source of the Iranian land forces powerful capability and Military Worth (See Table 3.1 and 3.2).

Operation Holy City began in May, 1982, close on the heels of the March battle. Three divisions used in the previous battle were redeployed from Dezful to the southern front near Khoramshahr. Three separate division size assaults toward separate targets pushed across the Karun river to recapture Khoramshahr and force the front back to the Iraqi border. As in previous attacks, it was preceded by night infantry attacks followed by rapidly concentrated armored attacks. This time, however, helicopters were the primary air support weapons.

By 24 May, 1982, the Iraqi defense was crumbling all along the front, Iranian forces had virtually cleared Khuzestan, and advanced to within 15 miles of the Iraqi city of Basra.²⁸ Khoramshahr, which Hussein had vowed never to

surrender, fell, and Iraq had lost almost 20,000 killed and almost as many prisoners to Iran.

It was an indication of the desperation of the Iraqi forces, that newly formed "triple digit" reserve units had been called to the front, as well as foreign workers. Volunteers for other nations, notably Jordan and Egypt had already been used in the fighting.

Following the first two years of the war, major activities slowed considerably. Iraq could not break the Iranian hold on the Persian Gulf sea lines of communication, although it carried out an increasingly ambitious, albeit largely ineffective air war against the Iranian oil ports at Kharq Island. Iranian oil exports continued to rise and hit the OPEC imposed ceiling in 1983, in spite of Iraq's imported technology and continuous attacks.²⁹ More recently, oil exports were more effected by fluctuations in the oil market demands and supply than Iraqi war action.³⁰

Iran continued offensives on land with decreasing effectiveness. Iraqi resistance stiffened considerably when the War moved into Iraq. Additionally, reduction in the Quality and Quantity of equipment had finally begun to tell.³¹ For example, Armored Fighting Vehicles (AFV) had dropped from roughly 1100 in 1980 to 700 in 1982. Aircraft had dropped from 725 to 67 in the same period.

The Khomeini government, setting political objectives, insisted that the war continue without pause, although the

military leadership, estimating its low probabilities of success, strongly counselled a pause to rebuild. Additionally, there was no shortage of volunteers from the people for the war effort. The result was inadequately supported attacks and higher casualties. During this period, Fall, 1982 to Spring, 1984, the Pasdaran was heedlessly expanded to almost 100,000 and was not always adequately trained, equipped or lead.³² The massed infantry attacks never failed for lack of courage, but did reduce the ranks of the Pasdaran through attrition.

After six years of struggle, the war continues without sign of a compromise. Recent events have suggested that the 1985 Iranian pause was a deliberate buildup.³³ Iran's recent two front offensive was apparently successful, although it is still too early to evaluate the truth of the matter. In any event, it is clear evidence that the war goes on and Iran continues to press into Iraq.

Iraq will not surrender, Iran is unwilling to stop, and neither side has the strength to force a sudden decision thus far in war. In short, Iraq can not win and can not quit; Iran can not be defeated and will not stop. Barring unforeseen circumstances, (such as revolution or large scale intervention), the war will end in either a mutual exhaustion, a continuous state of war, (such as between Israel and Syria), or in the gradual destruction of Iraq.

Overview and analysis.

The performance of the Iranian armed forces, particularly the combination of the Army and the Pasdaran, clearly demonstrates an abundance of Fighting Power. During the first two years of war, the army was resilient in the defense and powerful in the offense. Campaign planning was skillful and violent. High levels of deceptive planning were evident in the three campaigns examined as well as operational and tactical agility in the movement and concentration of forces at all levels. Depth was evident in the air deep attacks and effective use of deep insertion of commando forces. The battles were synchronized at a tactical level, carefully timing the use of infantry and armor successfully at night. The counteroffensive campaign, particularly the March and May, 1982 offensives, were genuine operational art; a combination of offensive punches in a single campaign with the same forces that drove the Iraqi's, reeling, into their own territory.

American doctrine is very similar in that it rests also rest upon agility, initiative, synchronization, and depth, as well as on violent execution. However, American doctrine does not suggest a willingness to accept the high casualties implicit in the Iranian tactical doctrine, with the possible exception of US elite forces. However, the Iranian success suggests an unexpectedly offensive role for light infantry forces. Given sufficient Fighting Power, and

adequate, coordinated Air and Artillery support, there is no reason that casualties need be so high, and every reason to believe that such forces would be successful against the most determined defense.

The Iranians, by aggressive use of light infantry as an assault force, supported by artillery and followed by armor, are repeatedly successful against a Soviet style echeloned defense in depth, although they are thus far unable to exploit these offensives to operational depth. Victories are possible using offensive, aggressive operations, if the commander is willing to accept the risk of high casualties. Within the limitations of the terrain, and Iraqi application of Soviet Doctrine, this may be an important lesson. As a minimum, it deserves greater study.

The continued offensives by Iran testify to its continued abundance of Fighting Power, although its losses in the Quality and Quantity of equipment reduced its Military Worth. However, it continued to prosecute the war successfully, as recent events testify.

It is clear that something happened which radically and perhaps permanently changed the Fighting Power of the Iranian army. This change had a multiplicative effect on the army's Military Worth which allowed it to resist a determined and well armed attack, halt it, overcome it, and take the offensive. This occurred when the Quality and Quantity of equipment was eroding.

It is logical to suggest that the revolution was the proximate cause of this radical change. The people, the army and the government, which were at war with one another under the Shah, were brought much closer to unity under the Islamic Iranian republic. It is the purpose of the Chapter four to show how that occurred.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER THREE

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3. Ibid., p. 650.
4. Ibid., p. 649.
5. Stephen R. Grummon, The Iran-Iraq War, p. 16.
6. Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability, p. 648.
7. Ibid., p. 645.
8. Richard F. Nyrop and Harvey Henry Smith, eds., Iraq: A Country Study, DA pam 550-31, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), p. 155.
9. Richard F. Nyrop, ed., Iran: A Country Study, p. 236.
10. Richard F. Nyrop and Harvey Henry Smith, eds., Iraq: A Country Study, pp. 251-252.
11. Data in Table 3.1, 3.2, and 4.1 are taken from The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability by Anthony H. Cordesman, pp. 726, 743. Source of Statistics is The Military Balance and Strategic Survey, International Institute of Strategic Studies, (Cambridge, England: Heffers Printers Ltd., various years).
12. Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability, pp. 728, 732. Also see Hickman, Ravaged and Reborn, p. 1.
13. Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability, p. 649.
14. Ibid., p. 661; Also Stephen R. Grummon, The Iran-Iraq War, p. 25.
15. Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability, p. 648.
16. Ibid., p. 663.

17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 670.
20. William F. Hickman, Ravaged and Reborn: The Iranian Army, 1982, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982) p. 25.
21. The Economist, February 21, 1981. This was not a change for Khomeini, but the events underscored it.
22. Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability, p. 670.
23. Ibid., p. 673.
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32. Ibid., p. 682.
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Chapter Four

The Effect of the Islamic Revolution on the Iranian Army

"History provides the strongest proof of the importance of moral factors and their often incredible effect; this is the noblest and most solid nourishment that the mind of a general may draw from a study of the past... One might say that the physical seems little more than the wooden hilt, while the moral factors are the precious metal, the real weapon, the finely-honed blade."

Carl Von Clausewitz

In the Chapter one I outlined the relationship between Fighting Power and the people, army, and government trinity. In Chapter two I demonstrated the weaknesses in that trinity under the Pahlavi Shahs; and that the military Worth of the army was probably much less than it appeared due to its weak Fighting Power. Chapter three demonstrated the surprising Fighting Power of the Iranian army in the Iran-Iraq War. In Chapter four, which follows, I will propose that the Islamic revolution was the cause of the significant increase in the army's Fighting Power, and explore the implications of that change on the military use of landpower in the region.

The revolution had both direct, indirect, deliberate and unintentional effects on the Iranian army. As noted in Chapter two, a revolution of the scope and totality of the Islamic revolution, has a significant effect on all aspects of a society. In the case of the Iranian army, it was tied closer to the collective intent of the people through the nature of the popular revolution and the actions and attitudes of the soldiers themselves. Through direct pressure by the revolutionary government, it was changed in spirit and intent to fit the government's aims. The relationship between the people and the government, through the fervor of the popular Islamic revolt, was significantly strengthened. The relationship between the three elements of

the Clausewitzian trinity were radically redefined and strengthened.

However, the revolution was not an unalloyed blessing for the military strength of Iran. Between the revolution and the Iraqi invasion, almost 60% of the army deserted.¹ Those remaining, who had seen their fellow soldiers turn on their officers, were undisciplined, unreliable, and restive. To make matters worse, two purges removed almost all the senior army leadership and 50% of all officers.² Logistical support, already riddled with problems, grew rapidly worse as western sources of supply were cut off. Technological equipment deteriorated for lack of maintenance and shortage of skilled personnel.

To explain how the revolution enabled that army, which had serious flaws to start with, rapidly deteriorating equipment, and rebellious personnel, to stop and defeat a larger and better equipped invader, is the intent of this chapter.

Effect on the People, Army, Government Relationship.

Ayatollah Khomeini's influence on public opinion in Iran during the revolt is hard to overestimate. Khomeini was a popular and acclaimed figure and the revolution was nothing if not a populist revolt. In Iraq, and during his exile in France, Khomeini's speeches and philosophy were broadcast from mosques throughout Iran. In fact, his exile

by Saddam Hussein increased his ability to influence the Iranian people, and secured his position as sole leader of the Islamic revolution.³ So manifest was his popularity, acclaim and power, that his return to Iran was a celebration and a triumph.⁴ Within a few days, even before the post-Shah government fell, he appointed a new Prime Minister to form a new government.⁵

Khomeini's primary theme was already deeply ingrained in the Iranian Shi'ites; that Islamic law ordained the rules of a righteous life; and that disobedience to them was an act against Allah and the Koran. Coupled with the real and perceived injustices; the Shah's opulent lifestyle and liberal western notions, and the deliberate terror spread by his secret organizations, it is small wonder that Khomeini founded an enthusiastic audience.

As this enthusiasm turned into revolution, then to a revolutionary government guided by Islamic principles, and finally to an Islamic Republic at war with an invader, the people and the government, which were naturally allied by common intent, became further cemented as challenge after challenge, both internal and external, were successfully met.

As would be expected, the feeling of the people for the army was strongly effected by Khomeini's attitude and pronouncements.

Khomeini followed two tracks in his attitude toward the Shah's army. He urged the members of the Armed Forces to desert and join the revolution, with considerable effect.⁶ At the same time, he urged his followers not to resist the army, but to recognize the soldiers as brothers.

"You must appeal to the soldier's hearts even if they fire on and kill you. Let them kill five thousand, ten thousand, twenty thousand--they are our brothers and we welcome them. We will prove that blood is more powerful than the sword"⁷

Although addressed to the revolutionaries, this was also intended for the conscripts. The soldiers, in the opinion of Khomeini, were the people also. This might also have been a shrewd trick by a skillful revolutionary who intended to subvert the military. However, as we shall see, Khomeini's later actions bore out this attitude. He was quite supportive of soldiers and officers of good Islamic credentials and had no intention of replacing the army. In fact, he intended to maintain the army, quite unlike the communist leaders of the Tudeh revolutionaries committees. He was supportive of the army's need for discipline and good order, and fair to those purged from military service, allowing them to retire and specifically according them "the rights and respects of all citizens".

Shortly after the Shah left the country, a large number of officers of all grades fled with their families.⁸ There was apparently no wholesale "reign of terror", which threatened officers generally, however an officer purge was made a top priority to assure the security of the new regime.⁹

The initial purge in the army was limited to General officers and those accused of atrocities. Of the 404 total executions during this period, only 26 were General Officers, who were, for the most part, of the Shah's security apparatus. The remainder, almost 200, were allowed to retire under the provisions of the law.¹⁰ Although many other officers were forcibly retired, there is little evidence of an indiscriminate housecleaning. In fact, this was resisted by the revolutionary government.

Khomeini recognized the need for a strong military and intended to maintain one.¹¹ Consequently, pressure, demonstrations, and demands by leftist elements to completely disband the army were strongly overruled. Khomeini saw these groups, particularly the Tudeh party, as a greater danger to the revolution if the army was disbanded. Said another way, he felt a greater security threat from the rival revolutionary factions than from the counter revolutionary threat of the army.¹²

There was also evident need to keep the army intact, aside from the need to balance other radical political

movements. As with the Shah before him, Khomeini was required to use the army in an internal control role to put down revolts in the traditional trouble spots: Kurdistan and Khuzestan. However, the army was deployed with a newly developing force; the Pasdaran or the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Khomeini ordered the creation of the Pasdaran at about the same time as the initial purge in the military was taking place. It was apparently intended as the coercive wing of the Iranian Revolutionary Party and an additional safeguard in the event of the Coup by royalist officers, as had occurred when Mossadeq had attempted to overthrow the Shah in 1953.¹³ It eventually reached a strength of about 30,000 and remained in its internal security role until the Iraqi invasion.

In an effort to support the army as an institution, Khomeini issued a number of unequivocal judgements between Feb 28, 1979 and December 31, 1979 requiring support for the army by the people, the army as the defender of the Islamic republic and its servant, and the requirement of discipline and good order in the army.¹⁴

Finally, in July, 1979, Khomeini issued a general amnesty for all individual servicemen, policemen, and even members of the Shah's security apparatus. His amnesty statement, which follows, links the three elements of the Clausewitzean trinity, indicates his intent to keep those

three elements; the Iranian army, "the noble people", and the government (Khomeini), strongly bonded.

"The three branches of the Armed forces are thus being pardoned, and I and the noble people forgive them."¹⁵

However, the second and more thorough purge was about to begin.

Khomeini was convinced of the necessity of a more thorough purge by his new minister of Defense, Mustafa Chamran.¹⁶ Chamran had considerable military revolutionary experience in Lebanon as organizer of the AMAL terrorists and as head of Khomeini's Committee on Revolutionary Affairs. Looking on the army as the product of the "Satanic" regime and in need of total revision, he began a thorough review of all officers at the grade of Major and above; those who the Shah had personally selected.

The purge was thorough, continuing past the Iraqi invasion, and its effect was wide spread. Hickman estimates that over one third of the field grade officers were removed from service, or roughly 9000 army officers. Officers who had association with the United States, particularly after the abortive hostage rescue attempt, were especially suspect.

Not only were one third of the field grade officer's removed, those removed were the best trained. The Shah had

sent the best of his officers to be educated abroad, many to the United States. Since association with United States was evidence of questionable loyalty, most of these officers in the army were removed. However, it also meant that those officers remaining were loyal to the revolution, and more importantly, Islamically purified and committed to carry out the government's agenda.

In addition, Chamran intended to reduce the army to half its prerevolutionary size. Desertion had by and large had this affect on the concripted enlisted force, and those remaining were, by default, more committed to military service under the revolutionary government.

The end result was not a shortage of trained officers, since the size of both the enlisted force and the officer corps was cut almost in half, but a definite change in the character of the officers and soldiers remaining. Loyalty was no longer to the Shah (personal pledges of loyalty were removed even before he left), but to the Islamic revolution and the military ideals of Islam. In short the army ethic was changing from self-serving allegiance to a despot, "the web system", to an ethic of military service to the revolution and the nation.

This change of values was also reflected in the new constitution. Chamran gave the army two specific missions. The first was straight forward; to guard Iran's independence, (Not to the Shah or any other individual, as

under the Pahlavi's). The Second, was to "safeguard" the revolution. Since the Islamic revolution was explicitly defined as pan-islamic and international in scope, this mission had international dimensions.

"Our defensive forces, therefore, should be intrusted not only with the duties of safeguarding our country's frontiers; they should also be capable of waging doctrinal Jihad in the name of Allah and the extension of His domain."
--The Iranian Constitution, 1983.¹⁷

The army, having accepted the dual missions, needed the support of the government, and Chamran stressed the requirement for obedience to the chain of command, irrespective of revolutionary councils or zealous clergy. The councils were free to express their advice, but

"the business of command belongs to the commander and the councils will not have the right to interfere in the affairs of the command"¹⁸

Although this reduced the discipline problem, other factions, notably the Tudeh party, continued to encourage the revolutionary councils.

Most important, however, for the people, army, government relationship was Chamran's vision of the organization of the Iranian Islamic army. First, the barriers between the army and people were to be reduced by eliminating class barriers and progandizing the army as the nation's defender and protector of the revolution.¹⁹ In part

this was intended to provide greater security for the government, which felt more confidence in the support of the people than the yet untested army; but it was also the observation by Khomeini's defense advisers that the "class rigidity" of the Shah's army was a reflection of pre-revolutionary Iran and would not stand up in the protracted warfare anticipated.

Second, the entire nation was to become an army, with the military professionals providing the expertise.²⁰

"We believe that the entire Iranian nation should become the soldiers of the revolution....The army should also be turned into a specialized and modern technical cadre."--Chamran, October 9, 1979.²¹

The army would be a small cadre of professionals with a very large trained reserve; in fact the army and the people were intended to have the same military purpose and really be separate components of the same system. Khomeini's announcement, shortly after Chamran's statement on October 9th, of the formation of the "Army of 20 Million" began a comprehensive program of military training in factories, schools, and on television, complete with staff planning for general mobilization. The "Army of 20 Million" was sometimes referred to as the Bassej volunteers.

Third, the army and army Officers were to stay strictly out of politics. This last was also intended to enhance the security of the government; however, it had the indirect

effect of clarifying the army, government relationship and enhancing the army's professional ethic. As stated by Clausewitz, "Political aims are the business of government alone."

The revolutionary government took deliberate steps to transform the army leadership and organization so that the people, the army, and the government had a common goal and clear, separate functions. They restored discipline, enhanced cohesion, and defined the national objectives and military missions.

This was driven in part by the nature of the populist Islamic revolution, in part by other threats to the fledgling revolutionary government, and in part by mistrust of the old military hierarchy. Although this was not solely motivated by a deliberate effort to enhance the military power of revolutionary Iran, it had the effect of significantly strengthening the bonds between the elements of the Clausewitzian trinity, and thereby, the army's Fighting Power.

Effects of the Revolution the Quality and Quantity of Equipment

In this section I will explore the effect on the Quality and Quantity and equipment and on the Fighting Power of the pre-invasion Iranian army.

As was noted in earlier chapters, the Quality and Quantity of the Iranian army's equipment was a reflection of the Shah's military modernization program. Although the equipment was plentiful and the best available, it came from wide spread sources outside the country and technical maintenance personnel were in short supply. In the best of circumstances, logistical problems were a nightmare.²² Following the revolution, things became decidedly worse.

As noted in Table 4.1, the equipment was still there, but its combat readiness was rapidly eroding. Defense expenditures were cut over 60% and did stay relatively constant until the year following the invasion. Of the three major portions of the defense expenditures (Personnel, Acquisitions, and Sustainment), personnel remained about the same the first year. Acquisition payments continued in many cases until the revolutionary government could take over, and in any case, were dropping before the revolution. The third element was sustainment and maintenance, and it was this area bore the brunt of the 60% budget reduction.

Additionally, the trained technical personnel, largely warrant officers, were anti-shah and made no great effort to keep the force in peak condition during the revolution. In any case, during and after the revolution, there were far more pressing issues in the military than the sustainment and repair of equipment.

Table 4.1

IRAN

	77-78	78-79	79-80
Defense Spending (\$Bil)	7.9	9.9	3.8
Manpower (000's)	342	413	415
Reserves (000's)	300	300	300
Tanks	1620	1735	1735
Armored Fighting Vehicles	2250	1075	1075
Artillery	714	782	782
High Performance Aircraft	401	669	715
Naval Seagoing Warships	7	7	7

After 1980, regular manpower dropped to about 60% of the 1979 level. However, the reserve manpower and the militia began to grow considerably, while the defense budget remained relatively stable.²³ At the same time, combat losses forced the acquisition of new equipment. Therefore, once again, little money was available for sustainment and maintenance.

Estimates of the operational capability of the military equipment after two years of revolutionary government vary by type and range from 40% to 70%.²⁴ Therefore, even though the quantity of equipment stayed the same until the start of the war, the quality of the equipment was reduced by about 50%.²⁵ (It is also worth noting that after the invasion, the ability of Iranian technicians and maintenance personnel to repair and rebuild equipment, especially aircraft, was "miraculous". This can be attributed to the commitment of the support force, although it may also be a testament to the courage of the pilots who flew the aircraft. In any case, the it is a reflection of the cohesion, morale, dedication, in short, the Fighting Power of the Armed forces, that allowed it to occur.)

The erosion of materiel readiness after the revolution has applicability to Van Creveld's formulation. If Fighting Power remained constant, then the Military Worth of the Iranian army would have eroded proportionally. However, as we saw in Chapter Three, the Iranian Armed forces were able

to meet and defeat the Iraqis, even though Iran's overall Quality and Quantity of equipment continued to erode vis a vis the Iraqis. Clearly, the increase in Fighting Power made up the difference.

As with Reza Shah's army, Muhammed Reza Pahlavi army, and the wartime Islamic revolutionary army, I have relied on the combat performance of the army to be the final indicator of its Military Worth and Fighting Power. In this period, the examples are limited. However, the performance of the army in this period is indicative of its changed character, effectiveness, and its new relationship to the people and the government.

During this period, the army was used in an internal security role against strikers and armed arab resistance in Khuzestan, against Kurdish and Azerbaijan rebellions in the north east, and in tribal rebellions. The Pasdaran also participated in these operations, as well as against several attempted military coups.

It is difficult to imagine a harder mission in more difficult circumstances: the suppression of rebellion with a rebellious army in the midst of a thorough purge with deteriorating equipment, in competition with a watchdog para-military force.

However, in spite, or perhaps because of the conditions, the mission was carried out successfully; in fact more successfully than the Shah's army had handled the

rebellions in the years before the revolution: the reports of rebellion ceased and did not reoccur.²⁶

The New Military Leader

Among the most important results of the Revolution, as demonstrated in the Iran-Iraq war is the new Iranian military leader. Repeated purges have purified the officer corps, assuring commitment, largely apolitical, to the Iranian Islamic republic. Officers in key positions in the military have repeatedly proven their loyalty by Islamic credentials and their service to the government. In addition, the crucible of the revolution and the war have assured that the successful commanders who passed the acid tests of ideology and loyalty have been advanced. The process is still ongoing. These officers are unhesitant, clear headed combat commanders of powerful courage and commitment. They are also ambitious; and their future is tied to the future of the revolution.²⁷

Two specific examples are in order. The first is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colonel Isamel Sohrabi, (there appear to be no more promotions to General in the Iranian army). Colonel Sohrabi became known as the "Butcher of Kurdsitan" during the uprising in 1979-80 for his brutal suppression; he also proved capable of doing quickly and effectively whatever the government asked him to do. The second is Colonel Sayyad Shirazi, Commander of

Ground Forces, who is now running the war with Iraq. As an army Captain, he was recognized as a particularly bloody minded and ruthless artillery commander. His rapid promotion, and the operational performance of the Iranian army is a testament to his skill as a military professional, the revolution that gave him the opportunity, and the revolutionized Iranian army.²⁸

In the final analysis, the major impact of the revolution was the change in the Iranian soldier, regular and Pasdaran, Baseej volunteer to Chief of Staff. It was fundamental and enduring, regardless of future events. After six years of the most brutal, grinding, combat since the World War I, there is no shortage of volunteers, no question of retreat, no loss of initiative, no drop in commitment, no search for compromise or negotiation. There is instead an eagerness to destroy the enemy and advance the revolution undimmed after six years of the hardest fighting imaginable. In the words of an American analyst in the Department of Defense,

"All the F14's and the M-60's purchased by the Shah have not had one tenth the impact on the war that the tens of thousands of illiterate young Iranian peasants have. Spending money on the machinery of war--the focus of so much effort and debate in the West--remains secondary; the central issue is the willingness of the troops to fight,

Their belief in their cause, and their confidence in their officers."²⁹

The Iranian army is now an instrument of enormous military potential. The changes effected by the revolution were profound, fundamental, and reinforced by the extreme pressures, not eroded. Given a cohesive logistical system, or a reliable backer, its regional power would be unmatched and its global significance challenge the superpowers.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

1. William F. Hickman, Ravaged and Reborn, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 16.
3. Shaul Bakhash, The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution, p. 49.
4. Ibid., p. 50.
5. Ibid., p. 51.
6. William F. Hickman, Ravaged and Reborn, p. 7.
7. Mohammed Heikal, Iran: the Untold Story, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982.), pp. 145-146.
8. Interview with MAJ Mark Boyer, U.S. Army. Cited Officer provided security for Teheran Airport the day the Shah left and for several days thereafter.
9. William F. Hickman, Ravaged and Reborn, p. 8.
10. Ibid., p. 9.
11. Nader Entessar, "Military and Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran." p. 9.
12. Ibid., p. 10., and Hickman, p. 11.
13. Nader Entessar, "Military and Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran." p. 10.
14. William F. Hickman, Ravaged and Reborn, p. 11.
15. Ibid., p. 12.
16. Ibid.
17. Extract of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as published in Nader Entessar, "Military and Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran," p. 15.
18. William F. Hickman, Ravaged and Reborn, p. 12.
19. Nader Entessar, "Military and Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran," p. 14.
20. William F. Hickman, Ravaged and Reborn, p. 14.

21. Federal Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report: Middle East Area, October 9, 1979, p. R13. as published in Hickman, p. 13.

22. Donald Vought, "Iran," Fighting Armies: Antagonists in the Middle East, A Combat Assessment, Richard Gabriel, ed., (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982.), No Page Number.

23. See Table 3.1, 3.2.

24. See Table 3.1, 3.2.

25. Anthony H. Cordesman, The Gulf and the Search for Strategic Stability, pp. 732,734.

27. Donald Vought, "Iran", No page Number, Section entitled 'Scenarios of Deployment'.

28. Nader Entassar, "Military and Politics in the Islamic Republic of Iran," p. 17.

29. Ibid., p. 15.

Chapter Five

CONCLUSIONS AND ANALYSIS

"Parenthetically, it should be noted that the seeds of wisdom that are to bear fruit in the intellect are sown less by critical studies and learned monographs than by insights, broad impressions and flashes of intuition."

Carl Von Clausewitz

I. Introduction.

This final section of the thesis is intended to review the major conclusions of the first four chapters, their regional implications, and their long term effects.

II. Major Conclusions.

The thesis has three logical steps leading to the eventual conclusion. First, the Imperial Iranian Armed Forces were fundamentally flawed. From its inception under Reza Shah, the people, army, government trinity had fatal cracks. Muhammed Reza Pahlavi, attemptin to build on the same foundation, increased the pressure on the people, army, government trinity, resulting in a collapse. The weaknesses of this trinity was demonstrated by the patent inability of the army to defeat the revolution in spite, or even because of, the lavish augmentation of equipment.

Second, the Islamic Iranian army, proved to have considerable power and resilience in the Iran-Iraq War. Surprised by a powerful invader, hampered by desertion, eroding equipment, and unreliable logistics, the Iranian Armed Forces resisted the attack and went on the offensive. Actions were characterized by unusual courage and fighting power, excellent staff work, and operational level planning.

Third, the change in the Armed Forces was caused by a

fundamental bonding of the people, army, government trinity, which in turn was a result of the Iranian revolution. The strong bond between Khomeini and the people, and the new army legitimacy and ethic, had a multiplicative effect on the military capability of the army. The result was an army with remarkable resilience, flexibility, and potential for growth.

Khomeini purged but also restructured the army and shaped it to fit a revolutionary Islamic model. The army was given two distinct missions; safeguarding Iran's frontiers, and extending the domain of Allah. Formed in the revolution and forged on the battlefield, the army developed a new legitimacy and professional ethic, outside of personal loyalties and political involvement, but founded in duty to Allah and the defense of Iran. The army became in law and in fact the genuine defender of the people and servant of the government.

The Iranian army is not only stronger and more resilient than its predecessors, it is arguably more powerful than its Persian Gulf neighbors. It has beaten back a determined and well equipped invader and has since carried the war into Iraqi territory over strong enemy opposition, without a reliable ally or logistical support, and with very limited air power or high-technology assets.

This occurred while the quality and quantity of Iran's equipment was eroding. Iran did so when Iraq had both

monetary and manpower support from the other Arab nations, overwhelming air superiority, and reliable logistical support. Iran was able to do so because the army was fundamentally strengthened by the Islamic revolution.

After six years of the most brutal warfare since World War I, Iran shows no sign of flagging in its resolve, and continues to prosecute the war. Iran gained the initiative and has not relinquished it since the first months of the war. It has, in fact, just recently renewed the offensive. In the early months of 1986, Iran successfully attacked in two areas; the strategically vital Al Faw peninsula, and in Kurdistan. At the time of this writing (April, 1986), the front has again stabilized, apparently at Iran's choice, since Iraq appears unable to make any substantial reduction in the Iranian gains.

III. Regional Impact of the War.

The war has had a long term stabilizing effect on the region. As a direct result of the Islamic revolution and the Iran-Iraq War, the Persian Gulf was moved to the forefront of U.S. strategic interests. It has generated the Carter doctrine, which identifies the area as a vital to U.S. interests, and two Joint Commands to respond to crises; US Central Command and US Readiness Command. The U.S. strategic interest, commitment and capability, makes all nations

concerned with the region more cautious, thereby stabilizing the region.

Additionally, the war has also accelerated the development of regional collective security, thereby stabilizing the Gulf internally. Through the Gulf Cooperation Council (begun in response to the war and to fears of the destabilizing effect of the Islamic revolution), the nations of the Gulf have now conducted joint defense exercises and other collective security actions. They have the apparent intent of countering Iran, and keeping the Superpowers out of the Gulf. These developments would not have occurred without the Iran-Iraq war as a unifying focus.

Finally, it has also caused a diffusion of the oil outlets in the region, reducing the vulnerability of the Gulf's oil LOC's to interdiction. The war has caused Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, to build new oil pipelines from the oil fields to ports on the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and below the Straits of Hormuz; all outside the Gulf. It has also made defense of the oil ports inside the Gulf of vital importance in the planning new facilities and the defense and restructuring old ones. This construction is difficult and expensive at a time when oil revenues are falling, and would not have taken place without the manifest threat of war. This is likely to have a long term

stabilizing effect on the export of oil from the region; far more than would have occurred without the war.

On the other hand, the end of the war will likely destabilize the region. When the war ends, the Iranian Army, which is committed to the extension of the revolution, trained in battle, and supported by a largely unencumbered policy of state terrorism, will be free to meddle wherever it chooses. As was noted, Khomeini can carry a grudge a long time, and is unlikely to forget that the Persian Gulf nations, without exception, supported Iraq. Should the war end without a change in Iranian policies, the Iranian Armed Forces, ideologically committed and hardened to war, could have a destabilizing effect on the Persian Gulf, Lebanon, and in other areas of Iranian interest.

To this must be added the influence of Iranian threats and the perception of power outside of direct military action. The Gulf nations have learned Iran is an implacable, determined enemy. Post war Iranian threats will have tremendous credibility, and resultant influence on the Gulf States.

IV. Post War Iranian Army

The present Iranian military capability is matched by its potential for military power growth. It has the national will, the motive, the opportunity, and the capability, to become the dominant regional power in a globally vital area.

Iranian national will, demonstrated by its intransigence and iron resolve in the face of enormous difficulties, is documented by its wartime performance over the last six years. It has genuine, credible motives to exercise its military power: retribution for support of Iraq during the war and constitutionally mandated "doctrinal Jihad" to extend the Islamic revolution. Opportunity is evident in Iran's proximity to the monarchical and autocratic governments of the Gulf. These governments are vulnerable to insurgency and terrorism, particularly assassination.

Iran's potential military capability has three elements: fighting power, revenue base, and militarily significant demographics. The fighting power of the Iranian Army is well documented and the potential for military power growth is evident. If it developed a sound logistical base, or was confident of reliable logistical support, it could have unparalleled power in the region.

Iran also has a reliable revenue base in its petroleum production. As was noted, it was able to increase its wartime oil production to the OPEC ceiling, in spite of Iraqi actions. Freed from wartime costs and interruptions, Iran's revenue base, purchasing ability and legitimate financial power will increase.

It also has a large and growing military male age population. As noted in earlier tables, it has a population of approximately 45 million, of which roughly 21 million are

males between 15 and 25. Iran's population grows at about 3% annually. Put another way, 600,000 military age males are added every year. More than 2 million males had military combat experience by the end of 1984. This was almost three times all the other Gulf nations put together. Only 500,000 of these had combat experience, mostly Iraqis. In addition, Iran's literacy rate of 50% is the highest in the Gulf, next to Kuwait. (Figures not listed in Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 4.1 are from The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1969-1984)

V. U.S. Long Term Strategies.

U.S. long term interests are straight forward: stabilize the oil production, re-establish the continental containment of the Soviet Union and counter state terrorism. However, strategic goals, no matter how simply stated, do not make up a strategy. The U.S. can take four steps to achieve these long term strategic goals.

The initial step would be to support the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). This collective security organization has the potential of balancing the power of a resurgent Iran, as well as Soviet regional adventurism. Since one of the motivations for the development of the GCC is to keep the Superpowers out of the Gulf, this policy must not appear to foster greater U.S. presence in the Gulf.

With this in mind we should encourage the GCC's eventual expansion to include Pakistan and Iraq. At some

future time it will also be in Iran's interest to join, in opposition to Soviet expansionism. (This is not without precedent; mutual enemies have often joined in a coalition in defense against a common threat.)

Next step is to encourage the GCC to adopt a strong Counter-terrorist policy and capability. This is certainly in their best interest as well as ours, counters the primary Iranian potential threat, and would enhance GCC and Arab credibility and legitimacy.

Third, is to maintain a non-aligned Iran. Russia is Iran's traditional enemy, and so long as Iran maintains an independent foreign policy, she acts as a bulwark to Soviet southward expansion. Also, should the Gulf prove relatively resistant to Iranian influence, Iran may turn its military capability toward the more obvious danger to Islam and Iran; the Soviet occupation and oppression of Afghanistan.

Finally, it is advisable to conclude a defense treaty with Iran in the event she is attacked by the Soviet Union. Such a treaty could contain any restrictions Iran chooses to impose, so long as she would accept U.S. logistical support in the event of aggression by the Soviet Union.

This would exploit the real Iranian military potential to our mutual advantage without endangering the region. It would also buttress the region against Soviet expansion, provide the US with a small degree of influence over Iranian policy, and allow more normal relations at a later date.

This is also not without precedent, although given the animosity of the people of Iran to the U.S., such an agreement would have to be covert. However, given that Iran bought arms from Israel, its sworn enemy, Iran will likely adopt a more pragmatic approach to its defense when faced with a Soviet threat.

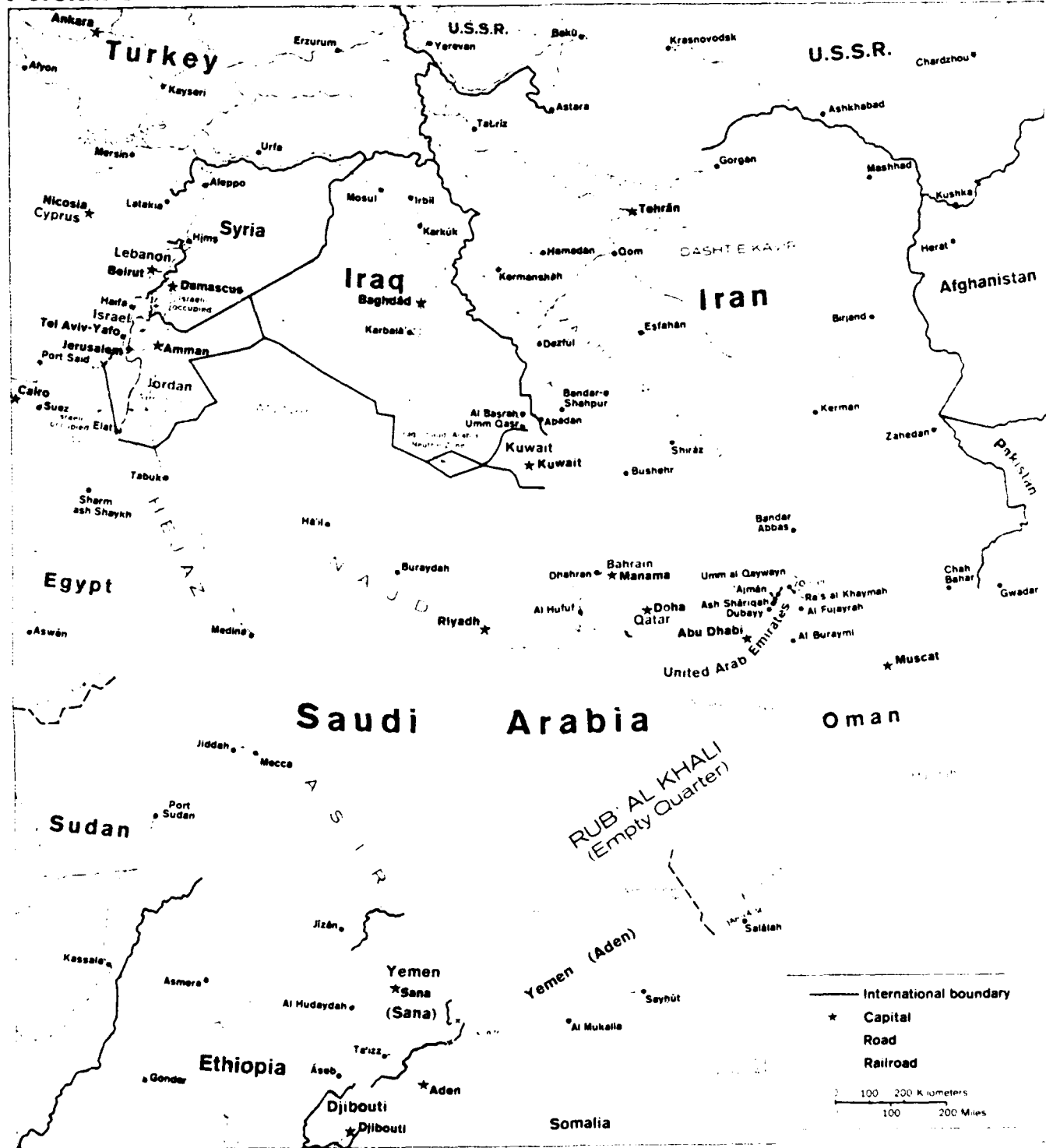
It is also worth noting that Iran's potential could as easily be turned to the Soviet Union's advantage, as to the advantage of the U.S. It is in our interest to coopt Iran, or keep it neutral, if only to prevent the region from falling under Soviet influence.

VI. Summary.

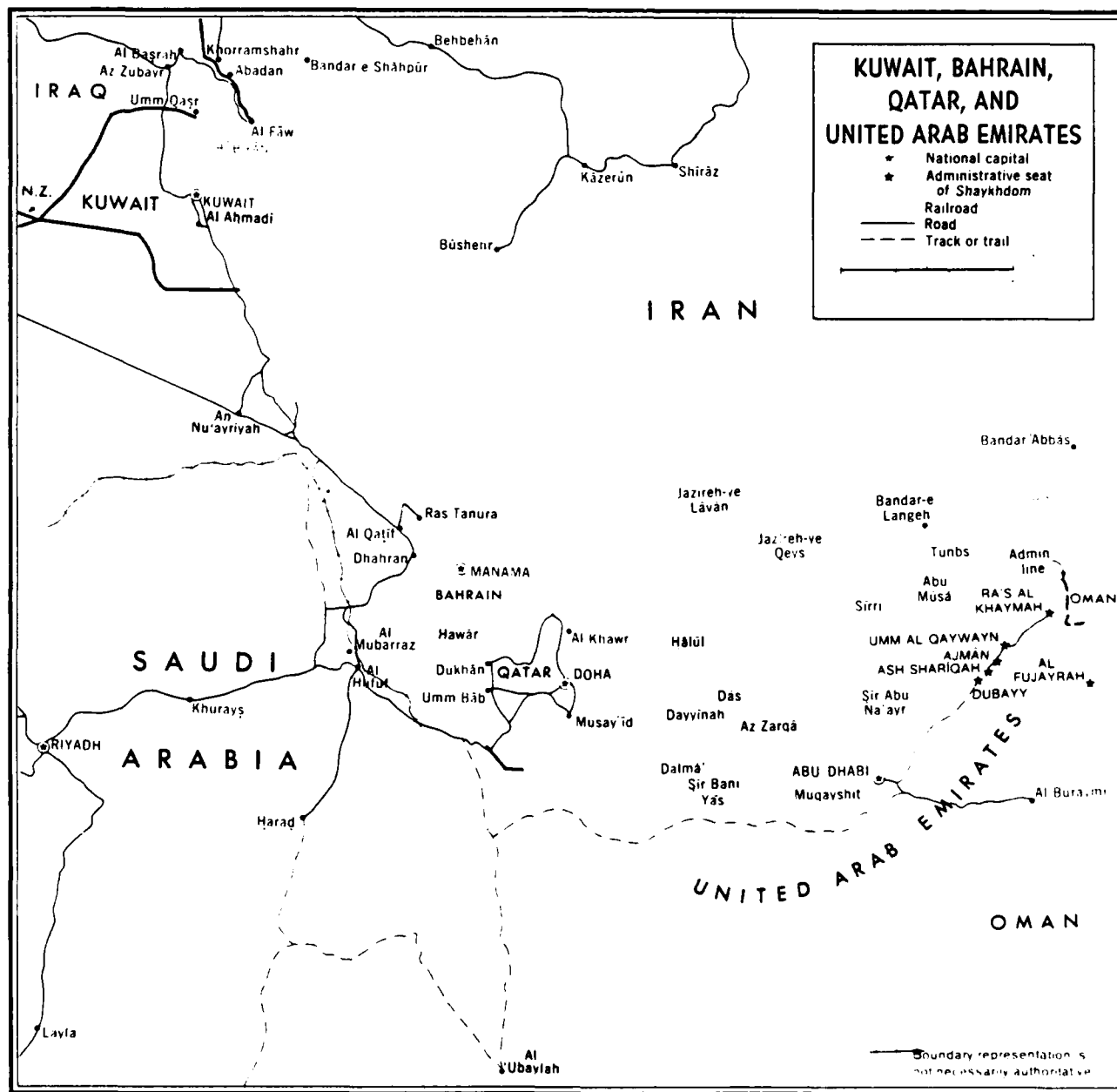
The Iranian army is a potent military force with the potential for considerable growth in real power. It was formed in a revolution which has a significance we are just beginning to understand. The army has directly and indirectly altered the regional and strategic balance of power in the Persian Gulf and has the potential for even greater influence. The war takes place in an area of vital natural resources, volatility, and strategic importance to the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The war, the Iranian army, and the revolution, deserve greater study.

MAPS

Persian Gulf Area



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Base 502930 4-76

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